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Student Literary
Publications

i





a magazine of poetry & prose

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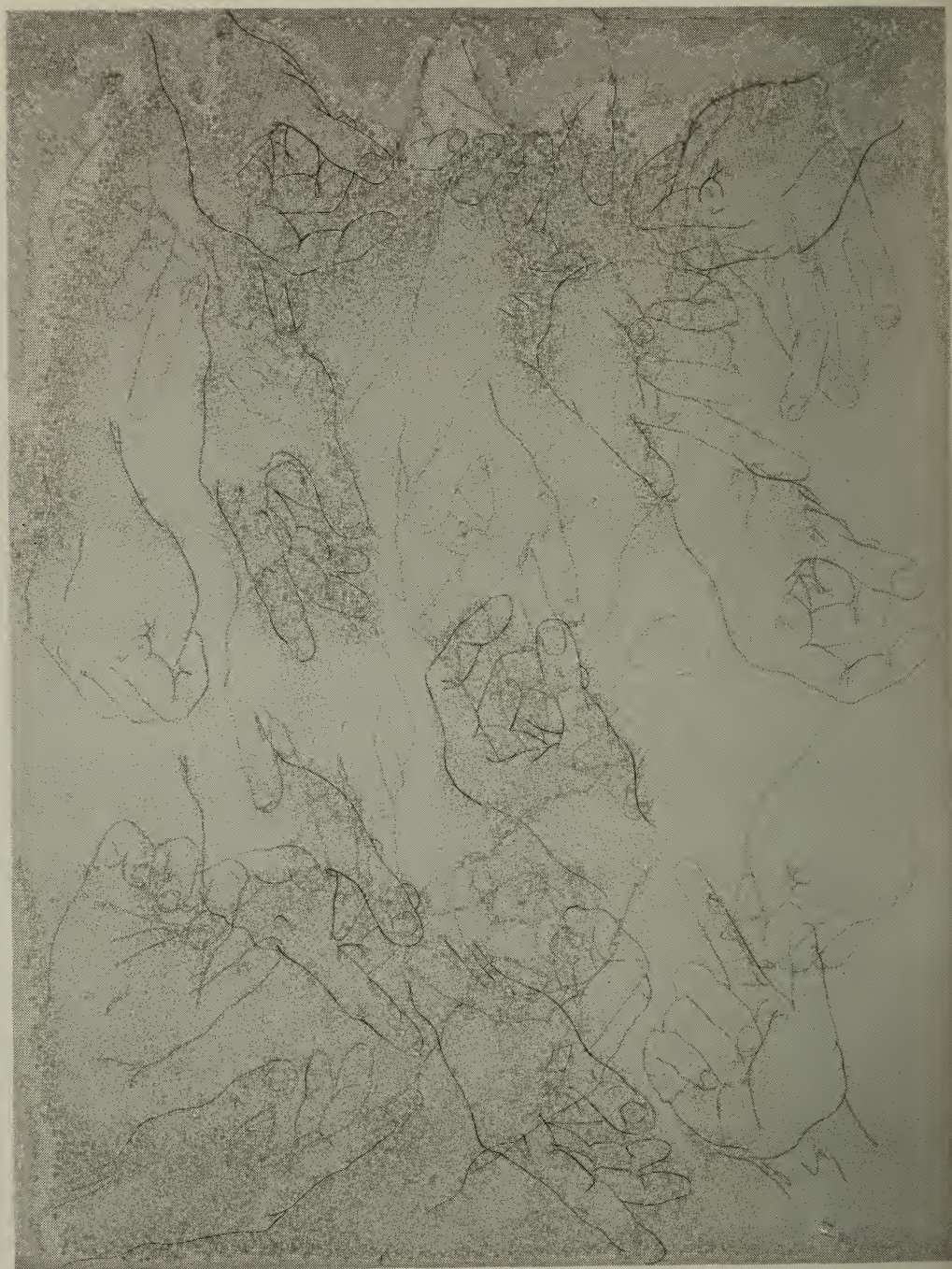
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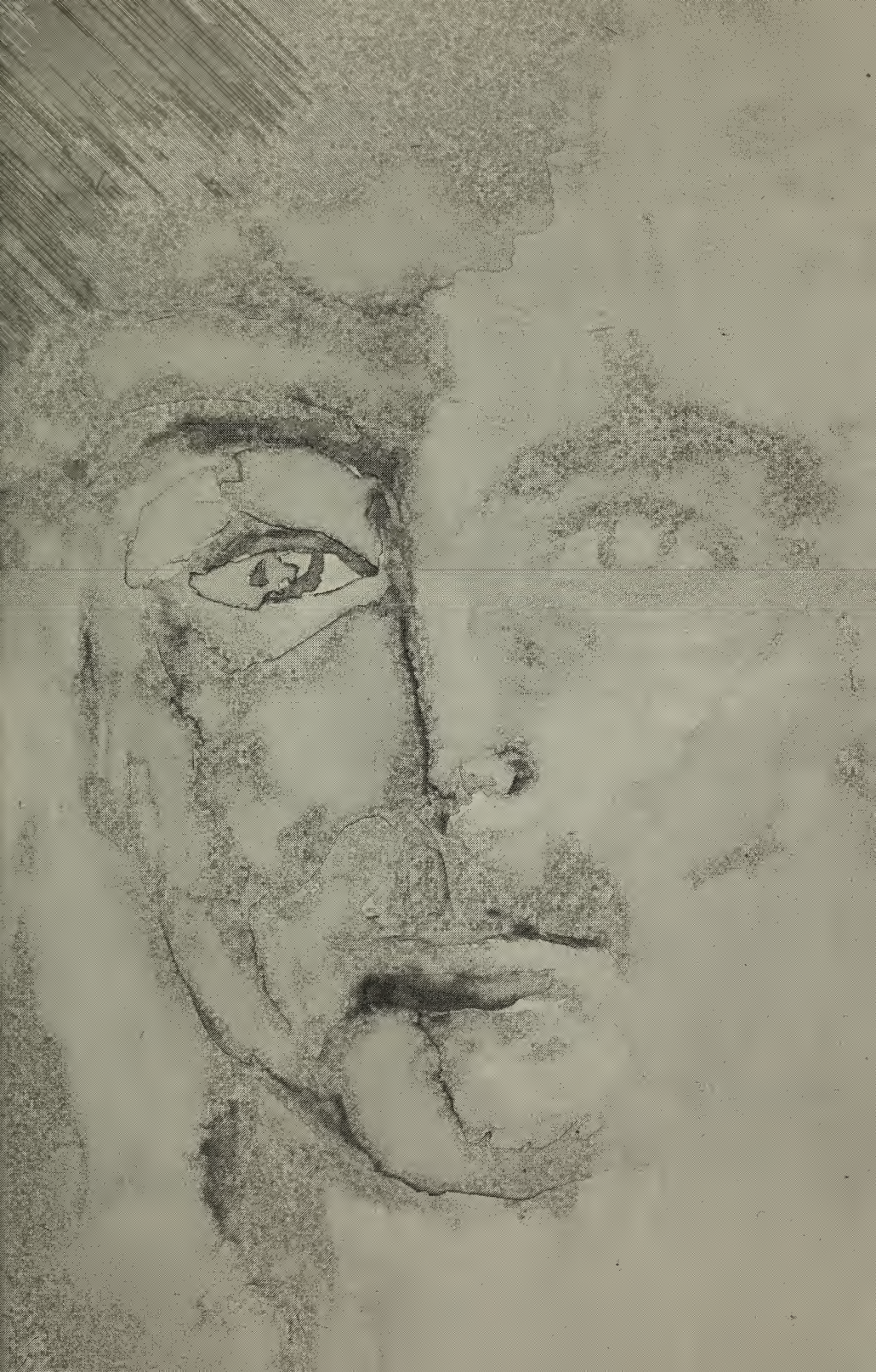
stretching, reaching out for
and yet not touching
then settling back
with almost
knowing there's another space
in the goings on
for
stretching, reaching out for
and yet not touching
a little bit closer . . .

leaving a fragment of
almost behind.

Donna Fenimore

when by night's first failing fall
he sits by his bulls-eyed butts
in trays and books in shelves
and the music has ceased
he waits, biting his nicotined nails
pondering his soul, focusing his sight.
the day draws to a close
on profound statements
by Einstein, Marx and Darwin.
the void of his iron-lung confinement
fills slowly with the gray smoke
of countless inhalations and exhalations.
wrestling with thoughtless ideas
of life and death, he exhales
yet another lung-full of smoke
to the tune of a sniffing sigh
while the smells of sweat
and day old wine—
the strong stench of vinegar
rising from the empty bottles --
permeate the lifeless smoke
and lingering air.
hurried heartbeats pace
his time-molded
oxygen consuming body
closer to the time.
his life glows dull
dark and empty
as an unlit trophy case
its silver in need of polish.

Robert J. Halpin



He
came to me
(somewhat hesitant at first)
shaking, hardly able
to keep
His balance

But gradually
(as if assisted)
His
confidence bolstered
He approached
me.

And
still appearing
(although much improved)
as an alcoholic
at his zenith
He reached my
presence.

I
wonder if
(he wasn't able to tell me)
his journey was
as difficult
as it
appeared.

It
doesn't really
(I tell myself)
matter I guess
a milestone has passed
And my son's first steps are
History.

Robert Stone

LOST LADIES ON DRY RIVER BEDS

Men cried, died, cried dead,
The earth
Died two days ago.
We walk alone,
Drink our coke
And we were lost and knew not
Tried to finish
People had, too
Many people
Dead rats
Lost ladies on dry river beds
Crying for a cup of tea.
We ate
Humanity
Humanity
Died
Rats lived
On and fed
From sludge
Riverbeds.
Ships sailed, crashed, sank deep down
Had no room.
Couldn't sail.
Too many babies,
Too little room
No bodies buried, dead can't be moved
Ten people every foot
Crowded miles
Twenty rats
Lost ladies on dry river beds
Crying for a cup of tea.

George Barnes

bare trees
in november
wet with rain from
heaven
remind me of
leaner days when
i thirsted for life
and the well was
dry as a duck's back
it rained
heavily and
refreshed its
dependents filling
the bare tree
limbs with a
leafy july lustre

Brian Landgraf

snowdust
dances at
our feet you
and i running
in the white cotton rain.
gray day shades
the eyes, no
sunshine squinting
sliding rolling
down the frosted
pasture hills
a smile
sparkle of winter wind
breaks
the dead night with
moonlight teeth, cloud
of lips
and the naked trees
waved good night

Brian Landgraf



I really can't remember my first impressions of this particular bum but I used to get quite a kick out of listening to bums in town present their life stories for the flip of a coin. Some would talk for hours about ex-wives, ex-gals, ex-jobs, and ex-D.I.'s. Others would talk about the old Boston, Scollay Square in its prime, the old Somerset Hotel, Mayor Curley and company and maybe, on a good day, a tale or two about at the old Braves Stadium. But most of them would just take your dime and get drunk .

I met this bum after a Sunset Series concert on the Common in early July. He was standing in front of the large picture window at the WEEI studios in Park Square gesturing wildly to the young disc-jockey inside. The DJ gestured right back but was no match for the bum's eloquence.

Approaching, I found myself in an earnest attempt to interpret the gameless charade the two men were wrapped up in. The DJ noticed me and pointed. The bum turned and stared. I felt like an intruder; admission by invitation only.

After a moment of silence, the bum, pointing to the speakers overhead, said, "Go back to the Common. I tryin' to get some real music played," referring to the concert I had just come from, and turned back to the window.

I lit a cigarette and waited.

The two of them gestured a few more times, when the music speakers were interrupted by the DJ's introduction of the next selection. I glanced at the DJ, who mutely slid back in his leather chair and seemed to gesture, "See, there's nothing I can do about it."

The bum seemed to understand.

I said that it must be rather difficult to try and communicate with someone by plexiglass and three hours of pre-recorded tape.

The bum turned and said, "Oh, me'n him are old friends. He knows what I want. He's just too damned lazy to put it on that damned tape before I get here."

"Where are you from?"

His tone changed.

"Ya know its clowns like you who can make livin' in a city miserable for guys like me."

Again I felt like an intruder, only this time more so. And frightened. Most bums either answered or left. I offered him a cigarette and leaned against the glass. With another change in his attitude, the bum smiled and pointed to the disc jockey. "He started three weeks ago. He was pretty nervous at first, but he's doin' all right," he said with a sort of paternal pride. "I just stop by every now and then to check up on him."

He raised his hand in a half salute and winked a 'job well done' through the glass and started walking.

"Ya got any money?"

"No." I lied.

"Smart kid."

"No, I really don't have any." For no apparent reason I was back on the defensive.

"I didn't say ya did, did I? You been talkin' to too many bums on the common. Keep away from them. They ain't worth the wine they sleep on all day long. Ya want some good bums? Head over by the Charles. Most of them come from Southie. A good lot."

I thanked him and offered him another cigarette.

"Ya like talkin' to bums huh?"

I told him sometimes it can be pretty interesting.

"Interesting?"

"Most bums tend to be pretty boring; talking about their ex-lovers and such. But every now and then you catch one who has a few tales about how he hit Boston during the Depression or something."

He chuckled, I didn't know if he was laughing about the bums or me. I didn't ask:

The conversation over the next half hour drifted lightly over many topics. He seemed to think that the bums along the Charles would vote for McGovern next fall and that the bums on the Common wouldn't vote at all. He explained that in the fifties the bums played an important part in the ecology by collecting empty bottles for their deposit money.

He said, "Sometimes I can really feel for the bums on the Common. I mean, in the age of No Deposit—No Return bottles there's really nothin' left for a bum to do, except maybe sell his life story for nickels and dimes."

I lit two more cigarettes and hinted that I had to be hitting the road.

"Back to the other side of the window, huh?"

I was confused. I was being put back on the defensive again.

"Back to the three hour pre-recorded tapes, huh?"

Supported by a side of a building, I tried to think of something to say. I suddenly felt an overwhelming fear. I wanted desperately to run but felt there was really nowhere to go.

"Sure kid, go ahead. But remember. The next time you find a bum interesting, remember, he thinks you're pretty interesting too."

Robert J. Halpin

NOVEMBER'S SONG

The wind
 blusters
 angrily
as it
pushes
the
now
insignificant
leaves
out of its way
 while
the mailbox
 beats
 the
rhythm
to
its
commands.

One,
lone
bird
twitters
a two syllable
"chirrup"
"Cheer up".

Cars
keep
going by
some
rambling
easily,
along.
Others keep pace
with the frantically
hurrying rabbit of
 "Alice
 in
 Wonderland."
Inside the houses
the clock is
 gently
 ticking
 the
 minutes
 away
 and
 chiming
whenever
the urge to meets its
fancy.
The radiator
 hisses

its warmth
 protectively
taking the
 edge
of the
 nip
 in the air
 which
 is
sending
 chills
up
and
down
my spine.
 Now,
as I'm
sitting here
 on the
 oversized,
 comfortable
 sofa
the moment
encompasses
 me.
Overwhelming!
 such
is the
 nature
 of
November's
 song.

Joanne Beauvais



A COLLECTION OF POEMS

BY

MICHAEL LAVOIE

I attended
an English lecture
this morning.

but

they were reading

from

“Romeo & Juliet”

and

all the while

thinking

of

yesterday

and

our inseparable bodies

so

I took as many minutes

as I could,

then walked out.

Life
flows,

from the wellspring

within,
can never become parched,
or dry,

for fear of
 wanting,
 needing,
 having.
 craving, for
I cannot give you
 inner peace,
You need but look in my eyes

And become it.

Hung over;

working a gas station

in town

Tires; batteries, oil and mufflers

all speak of the disposability

of life. When something wears

out, you merely throw it away

and reinstall another.

When love wears out, there are

no known parts manuals

used to replace the heart.

PAST INDIFFERENCE

Whenever

I was sick on you

there were

always

gutters

past indifference

to walk in

while

hitching

to nowhere,

living

for the moment(s)

of crumpled

windblown

cellophane

blowing past

my feet.

LEGITIMATE HOLES

Legitimate holes
in peoples' pants
are the rage.

Patches
no longer
are an extension
of poverty,
but a vestige
of recycled outerwear.

John had patches on his ass
in High School.

His mother
sewed them
with embroidery thread
in big Frankensteinish
stitches.

Everybody ostracized John
now
we imitate him.

“REFUGEE”

Summer has died and so has your love,

This season of death, and dismay,

will pass . . .

I walk solemnly through the woods,

in their beautiful Autumn clothing.

Laconic, almost tight-lipped I speak nary a word,

for they can understand my thoughts,

pour balm in my festering heart.

I stare into the face of a red and orange leaf

and take refuge in the lines of interspersed

harmony.

The woods and I share a commonality about life,

we know that no thing is forever,

so,

why did I ever ask?

IN JOHN FITCH'S WAKE

LAN

John Fitch

had no idea

of the vibrations

we could receive

walking

down the filthy artery

that bears his name.

with

cars

passing

snow rippling

in their wakes,

sweeping

infinite medians of

broken lines,

endlessly dusting

our symmetrically posed

(and very wintered)

frames.

Dwelling upon thoughts

of

yesterday at Ia Bang

(sin city enclosed)

in barbed wire

when everything

carnal

is contained

First noticed her

traditional dress

and straw hat

alighting from the Lambretta,

afterward

scrawling her address

on a pack of

empty

leaving me

to wonder whether

losing one's life

or virginity on foreign soil

was worse.



In silence I stood, looking
thru a pain `of glass
Many reflections passing by
And then I spotted you
But you were too far away to
hear my call
So I watched you walk down
the road, and let my breath
mist on a pain of glass,
That I wished wasn't so
cold
and asked why you didn't
come to warm me
I then decided to follow you
But by the time I got to
where I thought your destiny
might have been you were gone
again.
So I was left to be cold all
day.

Kathy LaClair

PROGRESS

They told us it was important
To the welfare of the country
So we let it happen
The other doubters and myself
Watched
As seedlings grew into skyscrapers
That punctured the clouds,
And cars, like locusts,
Swarmed the country;
Concrete beaches, and fabricated forests
were the only escape.
Now, even the stars my children see
Pay a light bill.

Renee Charland

THE FEVER MONUMENT

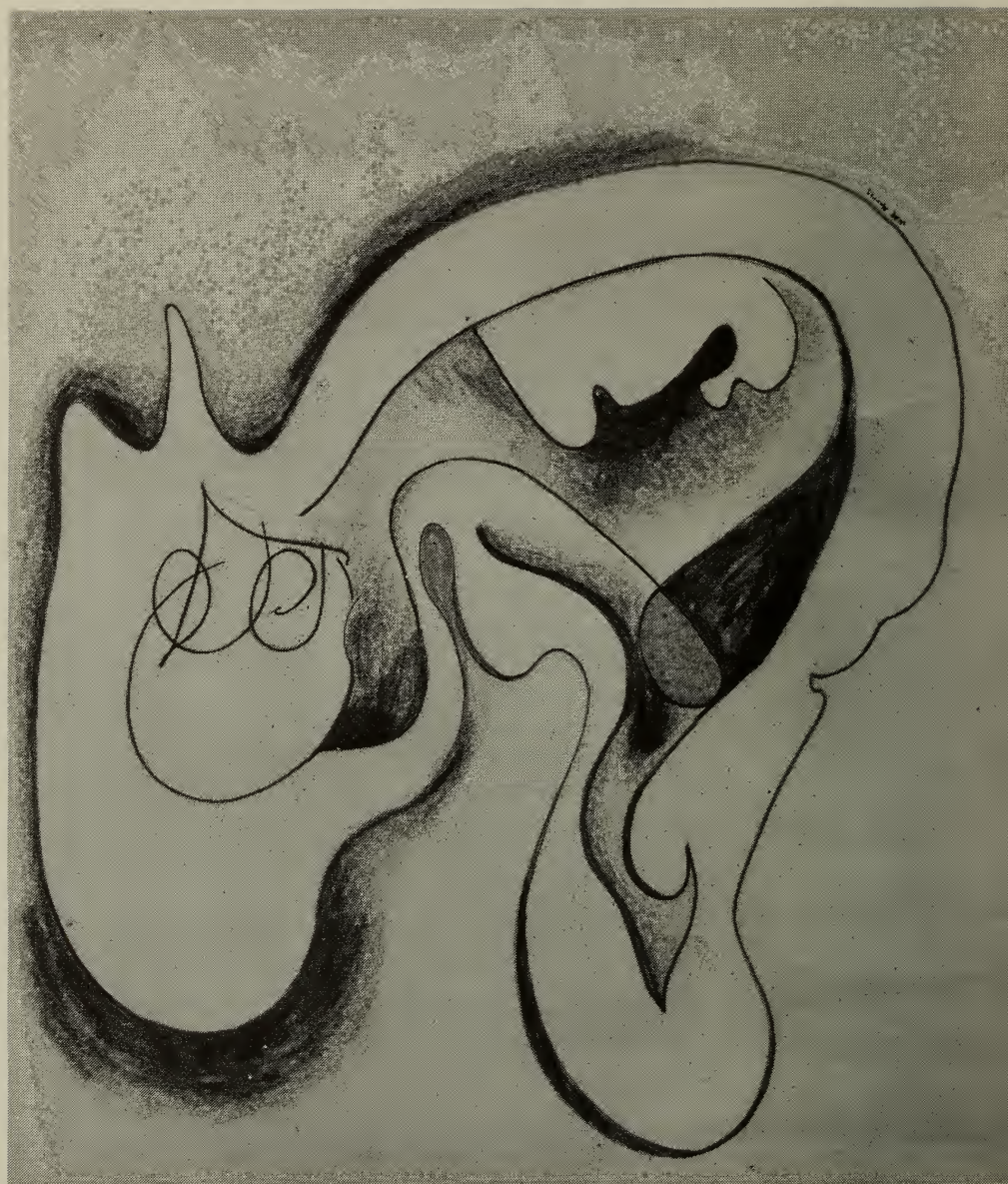
I walked across the park to
the fever monument.
It was in the center of a
glass square surrounded by
red flowers and fountains.
The monument was in the
shape of a sea and the plaque
read
We got hot and died

Joel Shaw

half asleep on the cold grass
 night flicking the maples
 under a black bowl upside-down
on a flat land
 on a wobbling speck
smaller than stars,
 space,
the side of a seed
hollow as bird skulls.
light flies across it
—never is seen.
a big rock weathered funny
old tree trunks turned stone,
 split rocks and find clams
 all that loving;
two flesh persons clinging,
clung to, door frames
notions, spear-shafts
in a rubble of years,
 touching,

this dream pops, it was real:
and it lasted forever.

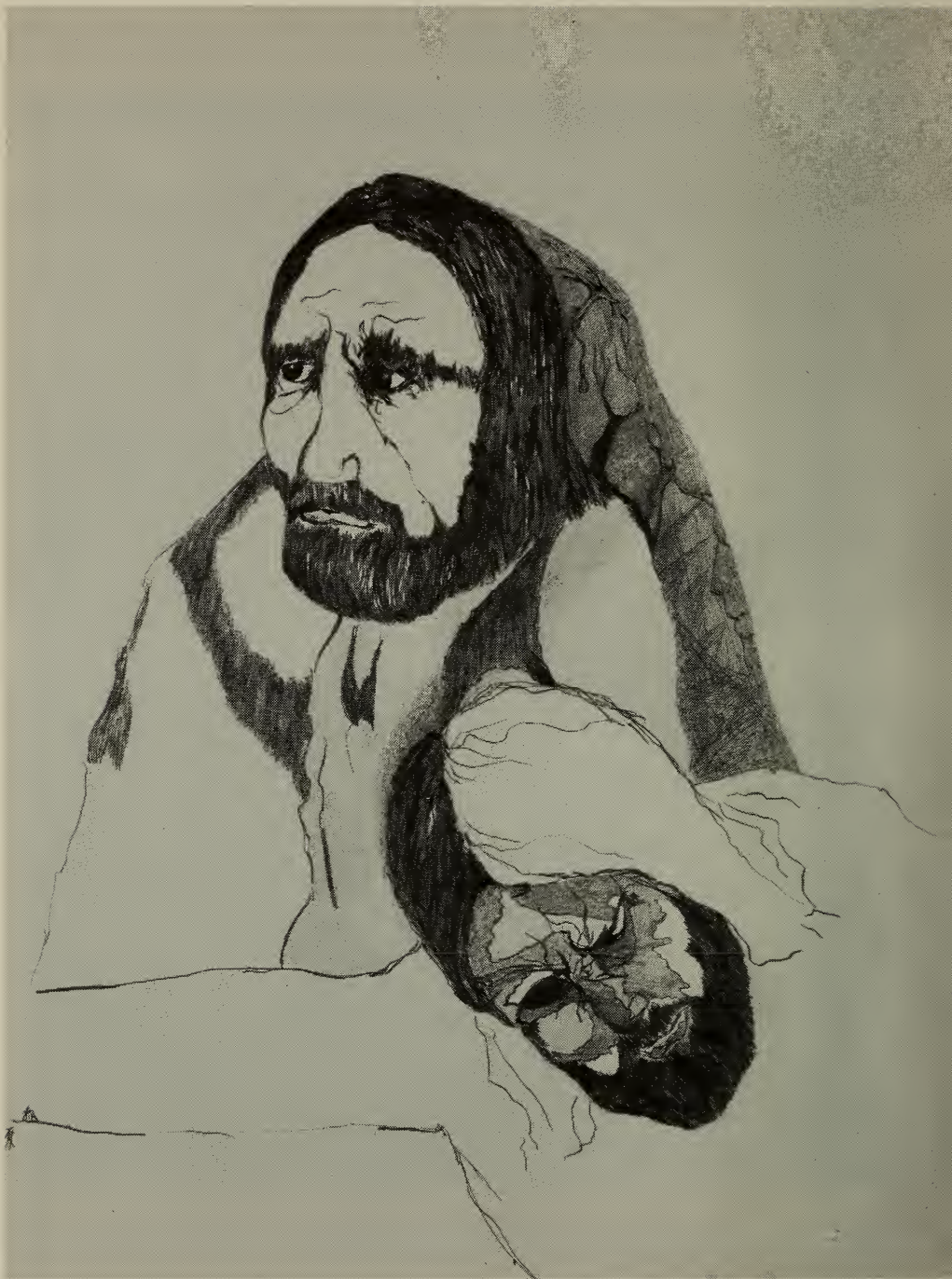
Joel Shaw



IF YOU WANT HER YOU CAN FIND HER

Where the kite meets the clouds,
In the snow making angles,
Through a field chasing butterflies,
in the leaves pretending,
or under a rock far away,
In the quiet of the morning,
Perhaps through a smile,
Just one step away,
Remembering once a child at play.
At the end of a feeling,
Through a shadow of a dream.
In a lost forsaken moment,
The memory of a scheme,
Picking roses that never blossomed,
On the beach searching for a wave,
Dripping with the rain.
In the flicker of a candle,
On the tip of your brain,
Down the corridor of tomorrows lonely wonder,
In a tear that never had a chance to fall,
The mirror that shows us all there is to know about her.

Kathy LaClair



SUBWAY FEVER

Heather squinted at the morning sun that hit her right in the eyes. She had called in sick earlier that morning and was glad to have the day off. The dress was just waiting for her at Givenchy's and she'd been saving for weeks to buy it. A ten dollar birthday check from Dad had brought her savings up to just the right amount for the dress. Tuesday was a good day for shopping anyway, since the stores and subways didn't have to cope with the week-end rush. Banging on a typewriter and listening to a dictaphone was hardly preferable to shopping on a clear spring day when the city air smelled fresh from the country mountains.

She moved lightly down the steps that lead underground to the subway. The air became heavy and musky with a used kind of odor. The stairs were lined with the usual litter and torn and ragged paper posters that had attempted to brighten the institutional grey cement walls. The buzz of voices from below mingled with the grind of subway steel and she hurried to try and catch the car that had pulled in. But she was too late. The car lurched forward with a high-pitched squeal of steel against steel and she felt the breeze the motion of its moving sent out. She detested subways. They were small and crowded and she always felt the heavy ceilings were going to cave in someday under the weight of the city streets above. Deep below the city in another world they rumbled through their patterned routes. In some parts of the city the stations were being redecorated in bright colors and posters. Coleman Station was not one of those. It looked as old and decayed as a medieval dungeon. It was decorated with old ad posters that had been there for years and people only glanced at them with contempt or idle curiosity. From across the track she could see a starving child with a bloated stomach and sores on its head staring at her from above a caption that read CARE. She felt the same twinge of guilt she felt every time she turned the page of a fashion magazine with the same ad. Next to that ad was another rather plain poster for a bank in large white letters against a black background. A girl with long blonde hair and American Dental Association teeth smiled from above the tracks and Heather could see that someone had drawn, with what looked like black crayon, a crude hand around the girl's bathing suited breast. Heather admired the poster girl's blonde hair and drew her hand up to touch her own medium length brunette.

There weren't many people at the station this morning. The few that had missed the last car stood impatiently waiting for the next. A group of students had squeezed themselves onto the two benches in the station and appeared to be in the middle of a heated argument. They caught her attention and she tried to listen closely for some clue as to the cause of the argument. Except for a few words like "psychology" and "paranoia" she could tell little of their discussion. A thin, intense-looking man with a green canvas bag over his shoulder seemed to be the leader of the group. His hands flew wildly through the air as he attempted to argue a point. As he spoke he gradu-

ally turned his head so that all the group could look into his eyes and face. Heather found the dark, thick eyebrows and bright almost aquamarine eyes a striking and provocative contrast. In spite of his faded jeans and worn shirt, she wondered if he was a professor of some sort. His manner was authoritative and even she, at her distance, could feel the intensity generating out of his slim body.

There was a rumbling that reverberated throughout the station and Heather turned toward the subway speeding toward her. Funny thing about subways. Before they even started stopping you could hear the steel screech. The cold, metallic screech. She could smell the electricity of the friction sparks and taste the metal in her mouth. The car gradually stopped and the doors slid open and the passengers began to disembark. Their faces were expressionless and their movements mechanical. Some of them looked as though they'd been riding subways non-stop for their entire lives and walking felt unnatural and awkward. She stepped inside the car and glanced around for a seat. She decided on the long side seat since it allowed her a good view of the car and its riders. The car was very stuffy and she felt uncomfortably hot, almost dizzy.

The dark man with the aquamarine eyes, followed by the academic troupe, entered the car. Heather tried to catch his eye, hoping he would sit near her. But they walked past and sat further down on the other side of the car. She momentarily thought of moving down and joining them, but she was dressed up and would feel strange around them in their casual, stylishly poverty clothes. Mr. Helms at the office often complimented her clothes. "You always look like you just stepped out of Vogue magazine!" he would exclaim, putting her in a good mood for the rest of the day. Her hair was curled ever so slightly at the ends, just enough to give it a "carefully careless" look. She took out her small mirror and put it up to the side of her face. Too much blush. But then again, the car lighting wasn't exactly flattering to her painstaking make-up job. One of her fingernails was chipped and she self-consciously covered that hand with her other. The dress at Givenchy's was simply perfect. She could wear it out on any dinner date and its sleek and simple lines were perfect flattery.

She sat back and looked up at the ads that lined the upper wall of the car. A cartoon girl with S-curved hair held an oversize pack of chewing gum in her hand. A piece of gum to brighten your day. A giant hand, beautifully manicured, held a small bottle of Excedrin between its forefinger and thumb. And an ad for the tribune. It boasted an expanded feature and cartoon section.

They were riding high above the ground and the car swayed unsteadily on the tracks. Heather always felt a bit afraid when the car rocked back and forth so hard

when she was this high. It seemed the car was rocking a bit harder than usual and it made her nervous. She was grateful she had closed the refrigerator and gone without breakfast that morning. The windows rattled and she looked around for signs of alarm from the other passengers. There were none. Her head felt hot and feverish and she wanted to open a window. She turned and tried to pry open the window behind the seat, but it held fast and remained shut. The swaying of the car didn't affect the student group at all. They sat quiet and content, staring into nowhere. Their lack of alarm managed to quiet her tension a bit, but she still felt the car was rocking harder than usual.

The man with the aquamarine eyes looked up at her and she smiled uneasily. Although not stern, his eyes held a direct and straightforward expression. His look was not casual. He was staring at her. Again she smiled but turned away feeling uncomfortable. Why was he looking at her like that? Was something wrong with the way she looked? She could feel the heat rising into her neck and head. Her lapel was straight, her stockings free of runs. She gave herself a quick once-over to try and find out what it was he was staring at. She was fine. Perfect. She looked up confidently expecting him to be staring idly out the window as before.

His stare was now deliberate and concentrated. She looked into his face and tried to make out the meaning of the strange expression. There was nothing flirtatious about that look. He was staring. Deliberately and purposely. But why? Again she looked at her clothes. Nothing.

The rocking ceased as the car started on a decline down toward the ground. A nervous itch began crawling up Heather's legs and back. She tried to concentrate on the linoleum squares in the car's floor. Beige, black, beige, black. The squares began getting fuzzy around the edges and blurred together in kind of a grey. She shifted her position, feeling very tense, and found her back sticking to the upholstery of the seat.

He still stared. Now they were all staring. The entire student troupe sat staring, with one uniform gaze fixed on her. She swallowed hard and felt a dryness in her throat. A choking dryness. Her head felt hot and her hands sweaty. She looked up at the ceiling and tried to ignore them, wondering if they could see how hot she felt. The car continued on its decline down the track ramp and Heather could see they were heading for an underground tunnel.

When the car plunged into the darkness of the tunnel, the sun disappeared and the lights in the car took on a dim glow. She jerked her head up toward the group. Damn it! They were still doing it. The muscles behind her knees hurt from being held so tight. Her feet were crossed at the ankles and she stiffly brought her leg up to change their position. The few other passengers in the car were either sleeping or reading. Only the student group seemed to be staring at her. She felt very confused. Maybe it was her imagination. She had read that often people are self-conscious without any real reason, their imaginations are the cause of their insecurity.

She cautiously and slowly raised her head toward the group. Their stares pierced through her and her neck ached from tension. She was hot and feverish now and could feel anger crawling up into her face. She wanted to stand up and scream at them. What are you staring at? she silently asked them. Perhaps if she met their eyes with her own, they would back off. She stared back at them as hard as she could. It was odd. No anger or hatred or dislike, but statue-like stares. She turned away and held her hand with the chipped fingernail tightly in the other. All together. Not a blink. It was her imagination, that was all. The nervous, tingling itch continued its path up her spine. It was those aquamarines that were the worst of all. The blue eyes were like rock, hard and shiny and staring. She tried to concentrate on the dark stone blocks that flew past the windows. Ignoring the stares was almost as impossible as meeting them. The ride from Coleman Station to Firman seemed a lot longer than its usual five minutes. The logical thing to do, of course, was to simply walk over and ask them what they were doing. But she couldn't move. Her whole body was tight and stiff. It hurt. Their stares were like a brick wall that she could bounce off of. Her mind screamed but her throat was too tight for sound. The dark man stood up from his seat and grabbed a leather strap hanging from the ceiling. Heather silently wished a sudden lurch of the car would send him crashing to the floor, but he stood and continued his unnatural stare. She had to keep her cool. Above anything, she must retain her poise. Let him play his stupid game, she was going to ignore it and think of something pleasant. But she could feel it.

She was grateful to see the Firman Station sign come into view and breathed a sigh of relief. The wheels scraped and pulled and the car slowed down. Heather knew her face was crimson and her leather pocketbook could easily slide from her sweaty hands. The car came to a stop and she sat anxiously waiting for the students to leave. Her legs were stiff and she burned inside. They were watching her every move and she could feel their eyes on her as she walked down the car toward the door.

You can make it to the door now, she told herself. Maybe it all is a trick of your imagination. She turned slowly and looked up the car at the group.

"What are you staring at!" she screamed. Her body shook with a spasm of frightened anger. "What's wrong with me!"

She fell back against rim of the steel door and the tears came. They came hard and strong and she let them come without fighting for her poise. She wanted to tell those people how infinitely horrible they were and make them feel small. But through the tears she saw they had stopped staring and were writing busily in small notebooks. She was too tired to ask herself why, or to even consider what she saw. It didn't matter. She stepped heavily onto the secure concrete of the Firman Station floor and searched the walls for an empty bench. She imagined herself looking very disheveled like an old rag doll some uncaring child had thrown into some dirty corner.

“Excuse me,” a masculine voice said behind her.

She turned and looked into the aquamarine eyes. They soft and smiling now and deep like Bermuda water. He took her by the arm and gently led her to a bench against the tiled walls. She felt strangely comfortable with his arm supporting her as he silently walked carefully guiding her away from the people in the station.

When they finally reached the bench and sat down, she leaned her hot head against the cool tile. The man with the aquamarine eyes laughed and she jerked her head toward him.

“What’s so funny,” she whispered, not really caring whether he answered or not.

He looked at her and smiled, saying, “You know, you make a damned good guinea pig. You really do.”

“Guinea pig? Guinea pig. Guinea pig!” She sat up straight and looked directly at him. “What do you mean, guinea pig!”

“C’mon, let’s go have a quiet cup of coffee and I’ll try to explain,” he said.

They stood to leave and as they walked Heather noticed a folder tucked underneath the man’s arm. On its cover was a label that read, “Test Studies of Paranoia in Diverse Environmental Circumstances.”

Leni Ilinitch



If you want me, you will find me
On Ashworth Street three stories high
I'm in the triangle, in the front
Behind the pink neon sign
With a green mushroom over a blue boy

I want you to find me in my triangle
Turn my hours like minutes into something real
We can say what's on our minds and laugh about what isn't
We'll put away our differences and share only what we have
Be just my friend and I'll take you three stories high.

Donna Fenimore

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

When I met you I loved you
so I told you I wanted you
but neither of us really
had the time
so you gave me a
Virgin Mary medal instead

Donna Fenimore

Sitting near the artificial light,
Feeling closed in without any windows,
I showed my restlessness,
Flipping through “Newsweek”, not interested
Really.

The receptionist advanced, fake eyelashes
Along with the smile-pearly white caps.
My turn came, fear punctured me.
I laid back, mouth opened
To receive the painful tinge of life.
Quiet, was I, enduring the necessary.
Walking out of that windowless world,
I could still smell the
Faint odor of burning teeth.

Celeste Rajewski

And on the third day's dark damp visage

From the earth His body rose

To the endless ever reaching

Past the gates of gardens closed

Seeking not what gifts were given

Going on past what was not

To enter all that was remembered

From His own forgotten plot

Interred into timeless tunnels

Flew back upon this earthen face

And saving us for our salvation

Abruptly stopped our lifelong race.

Michael Remillard

always worshippers
will be wizened of
There leather-tanned beach-

sun-blached
loneliness; sentries painlessly and
combing pounding to

muted their
in toe-sifting unto periwinkle
fro responsibility egos,

weight on
the of skies their eyes.
carrying gull-studded sea-blue

is by
beach landscaped completeness an pedestrian
Every into ancient

sands.
the
of

Michael Hackett



11/20/11
84

Pine trees whispering to sand
While sea gull sounds
Fall on empty cottages

Deborah Cooley

Red, sienna, gold.
A tree gives autumn poetry:
Brittle verse to hold.

Elizabeth Smock

Frail, naked birch:
Leaning toward the earth,
Listening for sounds of spring.

Gladys Sinclair

The rain still falls.
A lonely soldier calls out
his disbelief—the pain.

Michelle Royer

Like a winter blizzard
Confusion comes suddenly.
It coats my mind.

Michelle Royer

Warm radiators
hissing a soft kiss
Goodnite

Julie Peterson

From my glass treehouse
I look past myself
And see someone looking back

Carol Antil





It was almost six p.m. and the two guards whose job it was to distribute mail had already begun. As they approached his cell, the clacking sounds of leather soles against concrete grew less distant.

“One for Benji,” said one of the guards.

Benji jolt up from his bunk and faced the bars.

“It’s from your mother,” said the guard.

Benji returned to his bunk, opened the envelope, and began reading.

It was as he had expected, his mother was experiencing serious financial difficulty. He felt sympathetic towards her for a moment and a little guilty for not writing her more often, and telling her of his plans for the business. What a comfort that would be to her now, he thought. He continued to read and then paused; a bewildered frown covered his face. His eyes, with a quick upward motion of his head, left the letter and seemed to penetrate a spot on his cell wall. The words rumbled in his head.

“She sold the equipment!” he said. “Sold it!” he shouted.

“What’s the matter, Benji, bad news?” asked Jake.

“Mind your fuckin’ business,” Benji yelled.

Laughter pierced his ears. What a fool he had been, he thought. Never once had he mentioned his plans to his mother, and she had naturally assumed his indifference toward the business. Why not, he thought. He had never shown any interest.

“What a fool!” he said.

He threw the letter down and with the sole of his shoe mashed it against the concrete floor as if it were a cigarette, till it was ragged pulp. He could feel his dreams and ambitions slipping away. Emptiness filled him. He fell on his bunk. He turned facing the ceiling and with vacant eyes, stared.

He had missed supper the night before and was awake this morning when the bell sounded at six. He got up from his bunk and threw some cold water on his face. Its refreshing quality startled his every pore. With the towel, he nudged his face gently and quickly and with his face damp, he went into the kitchen.

His day passed slowly, and so did those that followed. His emptiness persisted and grew complete. His days and nights were no longer separate, but combined to create an endless sense of time. He became excessively passive, rarely speaking to anyone. Apprehension intensified as thoughts of his future flashed within him. His sentence would terminate in only twelve days, and there was nothing out there for him now.

This morning he moved slowly. He finished late in the kitchen and could hear Jake and Rudy, already out back giving the garbage cans their weekly hose down. Benji lit a cigarette and went to join them. On the way out he passed the guard who was coming in for a cup of coffee.

“Hi, Ben,” the guard said.

Benji gave no reply and continued on his way out back.

“Well, good morning, Benji,” said Jake, in his usual sarcastic tone. “What are you going to do now?” he asked. “There’s nothing to go back to—no press, no business, no nothing. You’re in the same boat as us now.”

“Leave me along, Jake.”

“What’s the matter, Benji? You scared about getting out now?”

“I said, leave me alone.”

“Your dreams are all gone to hell. Just wait till you get out and go looking for a job and get turned down time and time again. It’ll get to you some day, and you’ll pull a job and be right back here for fifteen, twenty years maybe, and all your good behavior won’t get you shit then, because you blew it first time out.”

Benji tightened and without a word, smashed Jake. He went swirling back and tumbled over a trash can. Rudy quickly jumped forward and caught Benji hard with his fist. Benji staggered back, clutching his stomach. The guard left his coffee and came running from the kitchen.

“Break it up!” he shouted.

“What’s going on out here?”

Vince was watching from the window.

“Who started this?” asked the guard.

“Benji did,” said Rudy.

“He just hauled off and smashed Jake for no reason.”

“Is that true, Benji?”

Vince stepped outside.

“Rudy’s lying! I saw the whole thing from the window. Jake hit him first,” said Vince.

Vince was staring at Jake, his large eyes steady and filled with anger. Jake said nothing.

“Jake, go inside and get cleaned up,” said the guard.

“We’ll settle this after.”

Jake went to the kitchen and walked slowly towards the toilet. Vince paused for a moment and followed. His heart had stepped up its beat. His muscles twitched. He walked faster. When Jake reached the toilet, Vince was right behind him. He pushed him violently through the door, rushed in, and slamming the door shut turned, grabbed Jake by the shirt and thrashed him up against the wall till his body was limp.

“You weasel-eyes bastard, you’re in big trouble,” said Vince. “I know what you’re doin’, and you’re in trouble.”

“I didn’t do nothing, Vince, Ben hit me first.”

“I saw the whole thing happen. Ben hit ya first all right, but you was makin’ him do it. You two bastards been pickin’ at ’im ever since he got here. Ya knowed if he hit ya first, it might mess up his parole.”

Jake squirmed. Vince swung him around and threw him against the opposite wall. Vince’s massiveness was overwhelming, and Jake was helpless.

"I'm tellin' you, ya better tell it right to the guard, 'cause I'll get ya if you don't, you know that."

Vince let him go.

"Get your face cleaned up and your weasel ass out there, an' I'll be watchin' you an' hearn' you too," said Vince.

Jake was trembling as Vince walked away.

That night Benji laid in his bunk; his emptiness replaced by fear, and not even the slightest trace of sleep was present. Maybe Jake was right, he thought. What was he going to do out there now? He searched for something to grasp but was unsuccessful. His mind continued to wander wildly. He could sense a tightness in his chest, and with an excessive flow of adrenaline his heart pumped in a panic. Now with striking emphasis, he was conscious of his fear of leaving prison.

"Only ten days," he said to himself.

How that time was approaching, it felt strange to be leaving the place which had from the beginning been repulsive and inhuman. It was now becoming a frightful experience. Although he appreciated what Vince had done for him, he wished that Jake had told the truth. How ironic, he thought—this place which he detested was now comforting. He was filled with anxiety at the thought of leaving its programmed security and its utter lifelessness.

Morning came with tormenting slowness. Benji, his mind and body exhausted, was up when the bell sounded. He went to the kitchen as usual. He worked slowly to the storage shed to pick up a broom. Then he went to perform his sweeping duties in the south yard. His melancholy state could be easily perceived—even by the most insensitive eyes. With the first sounds of the course bristles against the damp concrete, he wondered if first rate broom pushers were in demand out there.

"First time leavin's tough, Ben." He was startled by Vince. "I remember how it was for me. It's the same kinda feelin' ya get when someone dies, only thing it it's worse, cause all that emptiness gets so big, a guy can't help gettin' scared," said Vince.

“There’s nothing I can do out there now. All my dreaming and planning were useless, Vince.”

“A man can never say what he’s gonna do too far ahead for sure, Ben, no matter how much force he puts in his life, ‘cause too many things ya don’t know happen to ya, or sometimes ya just learn that your dream wasn’t too good from the beginning. Then ya ain’t got no choice but to get another dream.”

Benji moved his feet nervously.

“Dreams are good, Ben, but a man’s gotta feel ‘imself live every day. A man needs to dream too, Ben, but he’s gotta keep them ahead of ‘im all the time, and live ‘em as they come true in their own way. It’s like in the winter time when ya look at all them trees, an you remember how they looked in the summertime and ya wish they were that way now. You might want ‘em to be like that so bad that you think about goin’ around pastin’ leaves up all over ‘em, but if you’re patient, Ben, them trees be full in their own time. Ya don’t never wanta be scared that them trees out there ain’t never gonna have leaves on them. Know what I mean, Ben?”

“I think so, but how come you’re still here then, Vince?”

Vince was motionless. He looked down at the concrete, then slowly raised his head. When his eyes met Ben’s, he grinned and chuckled inwardly.

“Me and you ain’t the same, Ben, and that’s gonna make a big difference for ya,” said Vince.

“Why are you talking to me like this, Vince?”

Vince paused, and stared hard at Benji.

“I guess maybe cause you’re the only guy in here I know who had a dream. You see, Ben, I had me a dream, too. It was a big one, ‘bout folks livin’ together an’ all. I was gettin’ older, and I was gettin’ mad an’ real scared. Ya see, Ben? I seen that my dream wasn’t comin’ true. After all them years, everything was all mixed up, an’ I blamed it all on white folks. Things were buildin’ up in me, and I was gettin’ mean. One morning I was havin’ a coffee break and was sittin’ with some guys I worked with. I had been trying to like ‘em for a long time now, but just couldn’t. Then this guy who had been givin’ me a big pain in the ass for a long time started talkin’ ‘bout something he saw on television ‘bout colored folks on welfare. I told ‘im he didn’t know what the hell he was talkin’ about. He said, look here, Vince, you work same place I do, got a good job, and make the same kinda money I do. Then he

said that niggers never had it so good, and that their dream had already come true, but they was too dumb to know it. That's all he said, Ben, an' I got real mad then and wanted to smash him up real bad, an' I should've, then maybe I wouldn't be here now, but I got up and walked away, an all day it kept building up in me. By the time work was done, everything in me was all twisted up. I had no dream left in me, just hate. That night I went to this bar where I figured he'd be, and shot him an' just stood there till the cops came."

"I know what you mean, Vince. It's the same thing that made me smash Jake."

Vince nodded his head, turned and slowly walked back to the kitchen.

That night Benji laid in his bunk. His anxiety and tension seemed eased. His dream was gone now, but it had served him well as he nurtured and cultivated it from its beginning to the day it fell through. It had possessed his thoughts and in a sense preserved him, and left unaware of many of the brutal realities of prison life. It had kept the bitterness out of him. Sleep came deep to him that night, and with the sound of the bell he awoke feeling refreshed.

The remaining days passed quickly. This morning someone would take over Benji's duties permanently. His gear was packed, and he would be gone within the hour. How ironic it seemed to him, today, the day of his release, he was being escorted by a guard when before, as a prisoner he had come and gone as he pleased.

"I'd like to stop at the kitchen for a few minutes and say bye to Vince," he said.

"Sure, Ben, but don't take too long, the warden's waiting for us. I'll wait here."

Ben walked towards the kitchen; as he neared the building he saw Vince sitting on the steps smoking a cigarette.

"Hi Ben. How ya feelin?"

"A little nervous, Vince."

"That's good, Ben, that's good. As long as you ain't scared you'll be all right. I know how you feel. There's only one thing you gotta' watch out for, and that's the warden. When he makes his little speech to you, he's gonna ask you what you gonna do now, and you might start feelin' scared or tell'im it ain't none of his business. But ya see Ben, he don't understand because he knows what he's doing now, and what he's gonna be doin' for the rest of his life. He's the warden of this prison.

Benji looked at Vince, and extended his hand. It seemed to disappear in Vince's clutch.

"Bye, Vince."

"Take care, Ben."

Benji returned to the waiting guard and escorted by him, went to the warden's office. It was as Vince had said. The warden's words struck hard.

"Do you have any plans for the future, Ben?"

Benji's mind became slightly erratic, he felt a twinge of apprehension. He remembered how on many occasions his mind had fumbled in desperation to produce an answer to this question. The sleepless nights, the tension in his head, the continuous wondering of his mind and the depression. All of that, and still no answer. He felt a pressure growing within from the necessity to say something.

"Well, it's kind of hard to say right now, sir. But if we run into each other some time sir, ask me again, and I'll tell you what I did."

a scavenger gull
over the insistent
pebble-grating waves
slides towards
that sea-secreting substance
the sand
the sun
the sea.
a death lies within
the thought
loosing
roar
of the sand
the sun
the surf.
to fly here is not to rise
with the flurried beat of wings
but to
soar
with the sea-swept currents
of dreams.
to look upon my own shadow
stretching across the beach
and remember
a boy with a stick
a stone
the world between his toes
shifting slightly

but with firm support
for the smaller feet.
crashing, the surf
drags,
tearing back the sand
leaving at its mercy
an old man,
wading waist deep
against the tides
the sun to his back
facing only the surf
and an on-shore wind.
or this moment now
now
or that of a moment ago
caught like the gull
in a cross-wind
an upward draft
seemingly still
unmoving
for that moment
until it banks
its wings spread, spanning
towards the sun
flung up and off
javelin like
to an undetermined
point in the clouds.

Robert J. Halpin



RECTIFYING CRAP AROUND

Reckless beggars
between the stays
of concrete
scratching the surface for grain,
cleaning fingernails
for my meal.
We're combing our
hair
for spices and vitamins.
Reckless beggars
between the stays
of concrete,
smothering in the
sea of soot
collecting—
gatherers of a
new generation
harvesting mold.
If need be
that is to say
If need persists
in this
a world of haves and halves
This will be retold to some streetcleaner
who might wish he were there.

Joel Shaw



IN A DOLL'S EYE

The little dolls were selling like mad. When Mark had first presented the idea to Jim Helton, president of the Universal Toy Company, Helton had been skeptical. Would dolls made-to-order to look like actual people really sell? Mark's idea was to set up a large-scale operation in which dolls could be inexpensively replicated from photographs sent in by customers. Three-dimensional photographs. Helton had pointed out that to insure the success of the idea, the operation would have to be an inexpensive one.

"We'd have to hire artists, molders, all kinds of people. It sounds too expensive to be done on a large-scale basis. It just wouldn't be practical," he told Mark.

But Mark explained to Helton that his plan was one that could be carried out without costing the company millions. He explained that since he was a photographer, he had developed a photographic method by which faces could be easily replicated in plastic. It was quite simple. An artist would make molds for different sizes and shapes of skulls, noses, and eye sockets. The actual face would be shaped by coating the weak spots with a special solution and then immersing them into a fluid that could cause the spots soaked with the weakening solution to sink inward. This way, such individual traits as dimples, high cheekbones, and other facial characteristics could be replicated easily and inexpensively. It would then be a small problem to design molds for different sized body structures. It would run like an assembly line. The heads would be made, attached to an appropriate body, clothed in some cheap outfit that was similar to whatever clothing had been suggested in the original photograph. The entire process would probably cost the manufacturer four dollars per doll at the most. Mark pointed out that these were only beginning costs. After the operation gained momentum the cost would be down to two or three dollars per doll. The dolls could be sold to the public at a price of seven dollars a piece. They were cheap enough for the general public to take advantage of them. When Mark finished explaining the operation to Helton, Helton was pleased with its simplicity and decided to authorize his engineers to begin work on the factory set-up for the production of the dolls.

"Hell, it wouldn't even cost as much to the average consumer as a photograph does!" he exclaimed. "A three-dimensional photograph. Instead of having photos hanging on the walls, we'll have dolls sitting on the bureaus!"

It was decided that Mark would supervise the operation in the skull room where the chemical processing was done. He shook hands with Helton and left the office feeling that his life as a small town photographer was ending. He had an established reputation as an excellent photographer, but it was the kind of work that carried with it a sort of predictable sameness. The graduations. The communions and the new

babies. Mark found himself hungering for something new and exciting. And although the money coming in from his photography business was adequate he'd never had quite enough to take off for Bermuda or buy the Porsche sitting temptingly in the foreign auto dealer's lot.

The Universal Toy Company's Public Relations firm had already begun their advertising campaign when Mark entered the skull room on Tuesday morning. Boyd Rawdon, one of the art designers for the firm, insisted that Mark see some of the layouts for the ads.

"We're getting one in the *Times* this Sunday," he told Mark, "and we're trying to get them in various widely-read fashion and news weekly magazines. What do you think?"

"I like the way you're emphasizing the three-dimensional photograph business." He studied the layout closely. It showed a photographed picture portrait with a doll likeness standing beside it. "On this send-in coupon here, we should print a line for body characteristics, since most of the photographs will probably be from the neck up." The PR man nodded and Mark told him he thought the ad was quite effective.

There was still much work to be done before orders could be filled. The molders were busy designing molds for different body and skull shapes. There were molds being made with various shapes of noses and chin lines. Mark enjoyed picking out the different colors and threads for the dolls' hair. There were wavy threads, kinky threads, coarse ones, and silky ones.

The coupons started piling up three weeks after the ad appeared in the Sunday *Times*. Most of the body and skull molds had been completed and the project was set to get underway. Mark found himself getting wrapped up in his work. It was far more challenging than his previous work. It was made even better by the fact that Helton has promised him a substantial out of the profits. When the first hundred orders were completed, Mark was pleased with the dolls. The artists and molders had done an excellent job of designing the skulls and bodies. There were blondes with long noses, and brunettes with pug noses. There were dolls with wavy hair and dolls with long, straight hair. Even the hair styles were made to match as closely as possible. It was the hair on the dolls that was the most expensive to produce. But when the assembly line system developed into a definite routine, it was a simple matter of finding the proper skull to fit the picture, and gluing the wig-type hair onto the plastic head.

The real advantage in the dolls was that they were small. They could be easily carried and viewed by anyone. They could be stored in pocketbooks, bureau drawers, and suitcases. It really amazed Mark to see what his idea had turned into. Other companies tried copying the idea, but their dolls were much more expensive since they did not use the photograph-transfer method, which had been quickly patented

by Universal Toys. The big expense for the company had been to gather the materials for the molding and designing activities, but now those were set up and in full operation. The same molds were used over and over again.

The orders came in by the hundreds every week. New workers were hired to handle the assembling of the dolls. Once the engineers became familiar with the chemical processes of the photo-transfer technique, Mark found he only had to work half-days and was quite pleased to spend the remainder of his time relaxing in his lush apartment. His usual time for going to work now was one in the afternoon.

One afternoon, as he walked into the Universal lobby, the receptionist told him Helton wanted to see him. Mark wondered if anything was wrong and then laughed. He was probably getting a raise.

Mark knocked and entered the azure carpeted office. There had been changes made in Helton's office since the doll production began. Some original artwork hung on the walls and Mark noticed that one of the signatures on a painting was that of a famous and certainly expensive artist. Helton seemed glad to see him.

"Can I offer you a drink?" Mark nodded yes and a scotch and water was placed into his hand. "We've had a proposition presented to us and I wanted your opinion on it."

Mark sat down opposite Helton and listened intently. "I had a group of very distinguished gentlemen approach me this morning. Seems they were a group of psychiatrists and psychologists from the University. They want to conduct some experiments using our dolls and would like us to donate some free for the cause of education."

"It's not as though we couldn't afford it," Mark joked and Helton laughed. "Just what kind of "experiment" did they have in mind? Anything we could use for publicity?"

Helton nodded. "What they want to do is affiliate with the State Hospital in Benton. I don't know much about psychology so they tried to explain it in layman terms. Are you ready for this?"

Mark nodded yes and Helton continued. "It seems that they feel people break down because they hold too much inside. When you're small mommy and daddy tell you that sometimes being honest isn't nice, even though it's always good to be honest. The kid sort of accepts this double-standard concept because he's a kid, but in some cases as he grows older he can't express himself honestly and holds too much inside."

Mark was getting impatient. "What does this have to do with us donating the dolls?"

"They think they can get their screwed up patients to use the dolls to represent real people and take out their aggressions on them. Bobby hates mommy, so Bobby takes the mommy doll and beats the shit out of it. He can't beat up mommy so he gets the doll instead. Pulls the head off, tears it apart. No harm is really done because the mommy doll can simply be put back together."

Mark tapped his finger against his chin and was pensive for a moment.. "They think this would be good for the patient?"

"Sure, We'll be doing a service for mankind. And I'll tell you something else," he shook his index finger at Mark, "there are an awful lot of loonies running around out there who have never seen the inside of a state hospital who could probably get the same benefit from those dolls. The publicity from this project would be great!"

"And would we see the results of the study they're doing?"

Helton leaned forward. "They told me the results would be published in Psychology Today. Now, there's automatic publicity we don't even have to pay for. Of course we'll see the results. What I really want to know is, can we handle the extra load in production right now?"

"Well, you know the orders are still pouring in, but we have extra assembly people the Division of Employment Security sent us and I think we probably could handle it. Sounds interesting. How long is the project supposed to take?"

"Probably several months. They've got grad students to handle some of the tedious statistical work, but it'll be some time before they can get it all completed. But, look, think of it. It's not a simple matter of a three-dimensional photograph anymore. These little dolls of ours could serve real purposes to society!"

"Oh, you're dreaming, Jim," Mark told him. "The psychiatrists may use them, but to the general public they are still just toys, just playthings like anything else. That's how I see it."

One of the oddest cases Mark ran across while handling the psychiatrist study project was when one patient requested a doll be made to look like himself. Although most information concerning the patients was confidential, Mark managed to discover that the patient was diagnosed masochist who loved inflicting pain upon himself. Mark always thought of doll likeness of yourself was for vanity's sake, and this new use made him wonder.

Helton had given Mark a two per cent jump over the previous ten per cent cut into the profits. When he had gone over to the foreign auto dealer's lot to buy the royal blue Porsche, he began to feel the true results of his efforts. The apartment house in which he lived had an underground garage with complete security so there was no worry about it being stolen. Although Mark had much more money than he needed to live, he spent his nights sitting in his apartment watching television. The theatre didn't interest him and neither did most of the women he had met in the city. He thought of Amelia Lydell. She was a slight, soft-spoken girl whose shyness was evident and whose intelligence was often hidden. Mark had met her at photography school and now as he sat watching some re-run the thought of calling her came to him. He went to the phone and ran his finger down through the columns of names.

The phone rang several times before the receiver was picked up. It was Amelia's soft voice that answered. "Hi, Amelia."

"Mark! What a surprise. I heard you were in the city working for some big company. How is it?"

Mark answered that it was fine and he thought he'd call to see how things were back in town. "Did Joe Riley kick off yet? He's been on the way down for a while now."

"He died a month ago," Amelia answered. "That reminds me, Jane Riley said she sent your company to have a doll made of her dad before he passed away. Didn't you see the order?"

Mark explained that he wasn't always able to see every order. They only called him in on an especially complicated problem they couldn't handle themselves. He asked her how the people in town were reacting to the dolls.

"Oh, I was just dying to have a couple made myself, but I haven't been able to save the money, even though it isn't much. Oh, but you would have laughed Mark, you really would."

There was a pregnant silence and finally Mark said, "Well, what happened that would have made me laugh?" Amelia still had the same annoying habit of starting something without finishing it.

"Oh, yes, I was saying. Well, you know kids these days. Always rebelling about something. It was so funny. A group of kids from the Junior High School sent in photographs of their parents and had dolls made. Don't ask me where they got the money. Anyway, one afternoon the principal went outside and there they were, burning the dolls. Poor old Mr. Gersham, he thought it was some sort of voodoo thing. Almost had a heart attack right there."

"What in hell's name made them do a thing like that?" Mark asked.

"Oh, I don't know. They were probably made at their parents or something. It made quite a mess with all that melted plastic in the school yard. Some of it's still down there and it's so strange to see all those little glass eyes. It's almost creepy the way they stare at you, like somebody killed them. Well, I just thought I'd mention it to you."

"Well Amelia, how about dinner Friday?" he asked her.

"Mark! You didn't know I was married? Last month and pregnant too. And happy."

"Oh," Mark said, feeling let down. "Well, tell you what. Send me some pictures of you and your husband and I'll have some dolls made." Amelia thanked him and said good-bye.

The image of junior high kids in jeans and jerseys watching their parents burn frightened him. What was happening to his simple three-dimensional photograph? He went to the small bar in the corner of his living room and poured himself a scotch and water. So old Amelia was married. And happy. He shook his head and went over to switch on the television set. He tried to picture her softly blushing in the marriage bed. The T.V. picture came into focus and Mark sipped his drink.

He had switched on the evening news and the screen showed planes dropping bombs in vivid color. The scene switched and he could see bodies in uniform lying very still on a grey floor. The television camera switched onto the newscaster. "Today in New York there was a massive shoot-out at Larry's Lunch & Dine on the corner of Crossly and Harden Streets. Several policemen were shot and killed. Several suspects are being questioned." The camera switched back to the shoot-out scene. It was a run down and shabby part of New York. Bunch of nuts. Kooks. The image of the junior high kids with their plastic bonfire came back into his mind. He poured himself another scotch and water and before an hour was up the scotch bottle was empty and he was stretched out asleep in front of the blurry images on the television set.

It seemed the elevator was taking longer than usual to reach the top of the Universal Building. Mark was sorry he'd been hung over because he might not have been home to see the morning newspaper if he hadn't been. It contained a story of the policeman slain at Larry's Lunch & Dine. The prime suspect had been traced to a rooming house a block from the diner. When the police arrived, the suspect a long-since fled leaving several possessions behind. They came across several dolls dressed in police uniforms. They were amazed to discover that the doll's faces were

identical to the murdered policemen and that each doll had a huge hole in its little chest. They had been shot with bullets. The article had upset Mark and now he was anxious to see if Helton had seen it. The elevator light blinked Floor 14 and Mark stepped off. He opened Helton's office door without knocking and stood before his desk holding out the morning newspaper. "Have you seen this?" he demanded, pointing to the murder headline.

Helton took the paper. 'Hmmm. No, I haven't. I really don't have time to read it now. Couldn't it wait?'

"No, it can't wait. Our dolls! Dammit, you read this!" Mark had never before raised his voice to Helton and Jim took the paper and began reading. When he was through he threw back his head and laughed. "Well, that joker found a good use for our dolls. Stupid cops probably deserved it."

"Jim, that's not the point!" Mark was angry. "Dammit, that is not the point." Helton looked at him blankly and Mark turned and walked from the office. He didn't want to have to see another doll for a long time.

But he did see them. He saw them on the subway he took back to his apartment. People on the subways always reminded him of the dolls he made. Human likenesses with glassy eyes. In a doll's eye he could see the same blankness he now saw in the riders' eyes. Young girls carried dolls that looked like what could be brothers or mothers or fathers. Lovers carried dolls that looked like one another. When the subway car slowed down and Mark stepped off onto the concrete, he noticed a doll's head lying on it. He went to pick it up. Its face was wet and muddy as though someone had deliberately stepped on it. Someone had ripped off the doll's head and thrown it. It was the head's glassy eyes that got him. Solid blue and glassy. They looked at him and he stared back into them. They were artificial with no expression into them. What kind of fight had precipitated the throwing of this head? Was the real girl the doll replicated now hurt, or crying, or murdered?

Mark was lying on his bed getting drunk when Helton called.

"Get into the office." Helton said cheerily. "There's something important I want you to see."

Mark felt sleepy and lethargic. "How about just telling me about it over the phone. I'm in no condition to go traipsing down to your office."

"They've completed the study and I've got a copy of it right here on my desk."

“What study?” Mark asked.

“What study? The University Study at the State Hospital! The psychiatrists state in this report that the dolls had a definite therapeutic effect. In eighty-five percent of the cases, a reaction of total hatred was brought out on the doll by a patient. Eighty-five percent used the dolls as hate objects while fifteen percent used them as love objects.”

“Isn’t that nice,” Mark answered. “That’s just grand. Now we can promote hate in our advertisements and sell dolls for everybody to beat on. That’s really charming, Jim, just charming.” His voice had a sarcastic ring to it and he spoke slowly.

“Yeah! That’s exactly what I had in mind. We could contact Psychology Today and ask them to run an ad for the dolls . . .”

Mark hung up the phone. He felt very, very tired. There was a knock at the door and Mark felt a twinge of annoyance. Helton? No, it was too soon since he had hung up the phone. He opened the door and saw a tall dark man dressed in a khaki outfit. In his hand he held a doll and Mark could see the face. It looked like the same face that reflected out of Mark’s shaving mirror every morning. It even had a tiny scar on its forehead like Mark had on his. Mark was still studying the face in confused shock when the man reached his hand up and pulled the doll’s head off. Mark found himself staring into a gun barrel.

Leni L. Ilinitch

ART CREDITS

Page 2	Hand drawing	Sue Haaker
Page 5	Face in watercolor	Sue Haaker
Page 9	Trees	Harry Abraham
Page 14	Man with gun	Bill Tatum
Page 22	Girl in corner	Harry Abraham
Page 26	Girl (fetus)	Jim Morris
Page 28	Faces	Bill Tatum
Page 34	Girl with Hat	Harry Abraham
Page 39	Half-nude	Sue Haaker
Page 41	Girl on horse	Donna Kemp
Page 42	Trees against sky	Ken Boutwell
Page 52	Cannon	Harry Abraham
Page 54	Hand with doll's head	Jim Morris

